

NSC BRIEFING

11 April 1958

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BACKGROUND ON POLAND

- I. Gomułka has strengthened his leading position in Poland in past few months. Soviets have generally endorsed his leadership. He has again overridden factional opposition in his own party on two key issues: (1) economic reforms, and (2) the leading role of the Soviet party in the Bloc Communist movement.
 - A. Gomułka's internal opposition has been weakened by: (1) lack of Soviet support, (2) the popularity and success of Gomułka's basically nationalist policy of independence of USSR, and (3) defeat on economic reform issue.
 - B. Gomułka's independence of Moscow and deviation from orthodox communism was demonstrated in November 1957 Moscow meeting of communist leaders when he:
 1. Succeeded in softening anti-Western formulations of manifesto;
 2. Forced a compromise on collectivization of agriculture;
 3. Won clear endorsement of recognition of "national peculiarities";
 4. Opposed (unsuccessfully) formation of international communist journal.
- II. Poland is contributing to strengthening of bloc unity vis-a-vis West in hope of (1) promoting East-West agreement on disarmament, and (2) discouraging West German nuclear armament.
 - A. Increasing expressions of support for the Kadar government and Soviet line on Hungarian revolution; Gomułka's projected

tour of Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania this month; and this week's meeting of Foreign Ministers of Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia are examples of Polish effort to foster bloc unity.

B. All Poles reject idea that Oder-Neisse Line is subject to changes and firmly believe that it will be altered only by force: i.e., a re-armed West Germany.

III. Public disillusionment, poor morale, and lack of faith in regime's ability to improve economic situation have resulted from gradual outbasks of liberalization after bloodless, revolution of October 1956.

A. The regime has found it necessary to tighten up the undisciplined relaxation of the revolutionary period.

1. Press censorship has increased, though Poland still has freest press in bloc.

2. Although police terror tactics have not returned, population has observed that capabilities of security police are increasing.

3. Contacts with the west are still sanctioned by regime, but not as freely as before.

4. Non-communist social organizations (youth and intellectual clubs) are prohibited.

B. Fact that no significant improvement in standard of living has taken place since first wage increases just after October 1956. has contributed to popular dissatisfaction.

IV. Poland has embarked upon long overdue reform program to ease critical economic situation.

- A. Program of industrial decentralization and democratization containing some features of Western socialism was developed by liberal Communists with only minor concessions to Stalinist economists.**
 - 1. While populace will ultimately reap benefits of this drastic surgery, several painful years of belt-tightening seem inevitable.**
- B. Gomulka won party approval for reforms over Stalinist opposition; reforms are now being rapidly implemented by regime.**
- C. Removal of redundant labor in industry--first step in reform--will cause temporary hardship and undoubtedly some popular dissatisfaction.**

V. Prospects

- A. Gomulka likely to maintain tightrope status between adherence to Soviet foreign policy line and pursuance of independent internal course.**
 - 1. Polish people recognize there is no alternative but return to more orthodox Communist regime.**
 - 2. Poles will continue to enjoy limited contact with Western culture (western broadcasts are not jammed)--far more than people in other Bloc countries have.**
 - 3. Achilles heel of Gomulka regime will continue to be precarious economic situation.**